



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE COMING PEACE CONGRESS

BY ROLAND G. USHER

THE vivid fears of a considerable and by no means un-influential group of internationalists in this country and in England will not down that somehow imperialistic elements in the Allied countries themselves, however they may at the peace congress penalize Germany, or distribute Austria, apportion Asia Minor, or dispose of Constantinople and the Turk, will nevertheless carefully provide that imperialism as such shall be placed firmly in the saddle, and will then, by the familiar methods of the old secret diplomacy, barter away the fair heritage of democracy and the future of internationalism. Freed now from Kaiserism in Germany, we are to meet the not less serious menace of imperialism at home. Stilled into a frightened silence by the magnitude of the peril during the war, the pack will find tongue and give cry now that the quarry has been downed, and a scene will take place in London or Paris which, however veiled from the public eye, will rival the scenes at Vienna in 1814, or at Berlin in 1878. To avert this "peril" there is at present much writing and more speaking, with an aggregate to follow which paralyzes the imagination. Such men believe the whole issue of the war at stake, see it won and in the same moment lost.

Some center their attentions upon the nature of the peace congress. They feel that if a certain kind of session might be provided in a hall where considerable numbers of the general public might listen to a presumably illuminating discussion, the worst plans would be incapable of execution. The order of business, too, engages them. If they themselves could prescribe it, they feel that the congress might be led gently from one great proposition to another, and thus the guns of militarism and autocracy among the Allies be spiked before they could be discharged. They would print, day by day, the

records of debates and thus keep the public so promptly and convincingly informed of what was said as to influence the deliberations of the delegates themselves. The ratification of the peace by popular vote or by specially elected assemblies seems to many a safeguard of the utmost value.

Others center their attention upon the personnel of the delegates, convinced that so long as a certain class of men attend the congress, procedure and publicity will be futile to prevent the success of their machinations. Let us have no more bespectacled and frock-coated gentlemen, sleek, well-groomed, smooth-spoken, nonchalantly smoking cigarettes at desks or around a table. Let us elect openly in the various countries the men who are to represent us. Let the people with a large P choose delegates, and labor with a large L sit at the congress, and imperialism will indeed be defeated. These issues are already practical politics. It is high time that those who have not thought about these questions should begin to think, and that those who have already thought should review and revise their conclusions as promptly and as thoroughly as they may.

There are those who feel with me that this radical and idealist campaign by the internationalists is not without its objections at the present time because of its professed design to force the hand of the President in this country and of the responsible ministers in all Allied countries. The latter have already accepted the general proposition of a league of nations and have pledged themselves to the attainment of as advanced a form as is practicable at this moment. The agitation is objectionable, again, because the majority of those advocates seem to forget that, though we are settling peace for the future, we have also a reckoning to demand for an uncommonly ugly past, and the latter may make temporarily inadvisable certain types of international organization. The President will look well that the baby is not thrown out with the bath, and the anxious cries arising from so large a number of these idealists are unnecessary.

There is further no reasonable doubt that this radical campaign gives encouragement to the Germans. They see the probable advantages which they may derive from it in the modification of the practical terms demanded of them, the possible limitation of territorial concessions, the prohibition of indemnities, the readiness and willingness of many to insist that unless the good faith of the Germans is presumed inter-

nationalism will be a farce. The wider spread this propaganda becomes the more the Germans will argue that it represents a considerable section of the thinking population, and the more inclined they will be to question the extent and promptitude of the support which President Wilson can command; the more they will insist that the United States is not at one with its Allies. The election of a Republican Congress has not helped matters, as the President foresaw, and, Republicans and Social-Democrats though they be, the Germans at the Peace Congress will still do what they can to save something from the wreck.

Fundamentally, these radicals fail to understand the psychology of the Allied peoples. They see them as Americans living in Europe; they imagine them to be, except for the fact of residence, what they are themselves, and to be able to achieve that peculiar mental detachment upon international issues which it is to be hoped will become less common in America in the future. The problem of the generations to come is by no means an abstraction, and to suppose that it can be divorced from specific relation to the past and present in the minds of the European peoples is to ask more than flesh and blood can achieve. They ignore in addition the psychological effects of the war itself. Begun in aggression and continued in brutality and ruthlessness, the method alone of the conduct of the war, to say nothing of its origin, cannot fail to influence the minds of those who have been in immediate contact with it. The problem of peace is to them inextricably bound up with the fettering of Germany. Internationalism, as a separate, purely abstract issue to which the causes and character of the war have a merely vicarious relation is to them unthinkable.

I have never been able to agree with the arraignment of Great Britain, France, and the United States as imperialistic. I do not see that any one of them can fairly be said to have been in the grip, for a longer or shorter time, of aggressive, selfish, imperialistic politicians. The facts so volubly cited seem to me capable of other constructions. While it would be idle to deny that there are in all countries men who would be glad to conquer, seize, and despoil, there are no imperialistic groups in any of the Allied nations who can fairly be compared with imperialistic Germany, whose policies have ever been dominant in the same sense, or who will be or can be a menace to the future peace of the world in any such way.

I see in the minds of the majority of the Allied peoples of Europe a practical sense of the inevitable importance of some definite territorial and financial arrangements to the eventual achievement of an international organization which will answer the lofty aspirations and expectations of mankind. I see again some of the profoundest and finest elements of human nature stirred to their depth by very tangible wrongs. I see a generation of men who have for some decades lived in deadly fear of the very horror which has been visited upon them in a measure which their wildest imaginations never conceived possible. Here in America, separated from Europe by thousands of miles of ocean, separated from the thought of Europe by a fancied isolation of policy and a mental detachment a century old, we find it hard to grasp these impulses and experiences. They are to many of us not merely the feelings of other people but of another age, characteristic perhaps of an age which should not have survived, unworthy of enlightened men.

But who of us has not found that the great experiences of life cannot be vicariously understood? The problem of adjusting one's self to another individual is not capable of solution by theory; one must be married and try it. Birth, death, and parenthood, all the vital and elemental experiences, must be personal, must be lived, if their real meaning is to be grasped. Internationally, the majority of Americans are no better than children who have yet to meet life's problems, experience the elemental emotions and passions. We look upon war as a young man regards business, and upon peace perhaps as a young girl regards matrimony. This peace congress which is to assemble will be made up of men, and it may be women, who have undergone mental, national, and racial experiences of which we Americans have literally no personal knowledge, individually or nationally. We have never felt the shuddering horror that comes from the consciousness of an invading army within our borders, nor counted its toll of victims, nor realized that the atrocities related occurred at our own homes, and that our friends and relatives were the people mutilated and worse. The Europeans will come to the congress fired with a great and idealistic vision of permanent peace for the future, stirred to the bottom of their hearts with the determination to exorcise, as far as may be within their power, any such horrors from the lives of their children and grandchildren for generations to come. But they will also be

determined to achieve for themselves immediate relief from certain extremely practical and well-defined apprehensions of whose location and character they are by no means in doubt. Drawn one way by some of the finest and loftiest aspirations of which man is capable, they will also be influenced by some of the most elemental experiences human beings can undergo. It will be idle for us to suppose for an instant that they can see either abstractly, or can think of the one except in terms of the other. The internationalists conceive with ease of the readiness of the European peoples to sacrifice the vision of the future to the fact of the war, but they cannot so easily conceive of their absolute inability, because of the war, to forget the vision in the immediate necessity of reckoning with autocracy.

Internationalists achieve with greater ease a similar detachment upon the problems of peace. But the complex situation which the congress must consider has not merely a future, but a past—a remote past more real to them by far than our Civil War is to anyone now alive. They will not speak entirely for themselves nor of themselves. No problem will appear but has a past which will influence the attitude and feeling of the men there present to such a degree that it will become a living fact, endowed really with personality and vitality incomprehensible to an American of the present day who knows in his own consciousness no such issue. In comparison issues of international organization fall into the background, not because Europeans lack idealism, but because it is impossible for them to view internationalism as an abstract problem to be balanced off against other issues abstractly considered or as an abstract basis for the settlement of immediate problems. The decisions which will be reached at the peace congress will proceed from deep, unconscious, elemental promptings, experiences, and aspirations.

To such men come the theoretical internationalists with their elaborate plans for a league of nations, not of that practical sort which the President and the European Premiers seem to have in mind, but a specious and exacting array of committees, tribunals, and codes, with talk of sovereignties and equals, with a place for Germany and a chair for Austria, not in the sun to be sure, but equidistant from it with everyone else's seat. It is a plan which depends literally upon mutual confidence between all the contracting parties, upon hearty coöperation, upon good faith and the literal probab-

ity that each nation is to receive from others some measure of the Golden Rule. Provisions are made for the punishment of those who break its laws, but to those who have lived this war the scheme involves nothing more nor less than the necessity of trusting Germans. To them that is tantamount to forgetting the origin of the war and condoning its atrocities. If Germany is trustworthy, what need of guarantees and indemnities? If the wrong was committed by imperialist politicians and generals, let them be exiled and executed, but why impose an indemnity upon the German people whom they misled and slaughtered? There may be in that argument excellent logic, but they who have suffered and bled cannot rid themselves of the haunting fear that, if the Germans were once misled, they may be again deceived. Possibly, too, the people at large had their share in the responsibility. The fear of Germany is and ought to be too strong to countenance a plan which postulates as its fundamental concept the trustworthiness of Germany.

The premises of internationalism furthermore presume that nationality is less admirable and desirable than a cosmopolitan sympathy among all peoples, yet the truth is that the great majority of the men in the Allied countries have found their strongest personal impulse one of nationality and patriotic pride in their country and their race. Many of the smaller countries have seen the chief aim of the war in the reunion of racial elements long sundered. Good or bad, nationalism has been and is still a powerful conscious and subconscious force in most individuals in Europe. Here we are so secure in our general cosmopolitan-like Americanism, in our national compound of all other nationalities, that we do not conceive readily of the strength and character of the feelings which others entertain. No Serbian, Belgian, or Roumanian wishes to be told that nationalism is a less admirable trait than a general cosmopolitan tolerance for everybody. No Frenchman nor Britisher believes or wants to believe that he is no better than the Boche.

The publicity of diplomatic discussions will be effective in controlling the congress only if the delegates can be prevented from making agreements previous to the congress or between its sessions. This is a practical issue of a breadth apparently unsuspected. It will be difficult if not impossible to prevent any discussions outside the public sessions so long as there remains anything to be disputed which the contract-

ing Powers would prefer not to debate in public. There will be no more "secret" conclaves, publicly avowed; nor sessions in which a few astute gentlemen will pledge their various nations to important decisions without previous or subsequent information to the people of the various countries of what was done or pledged. In the past the coming of these diplomats has been heralded and trumpeted and the public has anxiously watched in the press for the news that Prince So and So smiled pleasantly when he met Sir So and So, that the King of This was seen taking his coffee amicably with the King of That, that the Tsar made a joke at which the Kaiser laughed. They felt that somehow they thus secured a clew to what was being said in the sessions behind those closed doors.

But if discussions are to take place, the men who attend must be in the same town; certain of them will live—and it will be physically impossible to prevent it—within a certain small radius of space, and so long as some unavoidably eat with each other, meet each other on the street, or may clamber around fire-escapes into each other's rooms at two in the morning, to say nothing of having met each other weeks previously in secret, it will be impossible to be sure that no conversations have preceded the public sessions, and that no midnight colloquies of diplomats in pajamas rather than in court dress convened between the sessions. Short of putting them in solitary confinement for several months before and for all periods between sessions, the possibility of conversations, otherwise than in public, cannot be foreclosed. So long as such discussions are possible, previous agreements can and possibly will be made.

One objection to a literal publicity lies in the existence of a good many issues to decide of a type which commonly are incapable of compromise once the facts have been made public. They are not issues of law nor questions of evidence or of history; they are issues of comparative power, of relative fears, or are clashes of nationalist ambitions. What sort of a debate would take place in public between the Serbians, the Albanians, the Jugo-Slavs, and the Greeks over the question of the rearrangement of territorial boundaries in the western Balkans? Even if we suppose that the Italian Irredentists can be kept entirely silent, the difficulty here is that five parties believe they have convincing claims to the same territory, and all cannot receive it. Some sort of a com-

promise is inevitable. Some or all of them will be compelled to accept less than the people of those various countries are quite determined to have. It would be painful to compel the delegates to debate that compromise in public, and would certainly not redound to the unity of the Allies at the Congress, nor probably promote good feeling between those various peoples in the years to come. But the vital objection to publicity in diplomacy is the chance it will give the Germans to defeat the aims and purposes of the war by a specious usage of possible or probable disagreements, or by the revelation of objectionable and unpleasant facts about the attitudes of the various Allies in the past to the Central Powers or to each other. The Europeans, who are more experienced than we are sounding still the note of caution: some real earnest of the reconstruction of Germans is going to be necessary and it will require time before its sincerity can become evident.

It is unfortunate, but there seems to exist a disposition to ignore the importance of the truly tremendous gains already won during the war for internationalism. Indeed it might be said that so much has already been won that the internationalists hope to achieve everything. The peace conference, as the Allies have already sketched it, will be for the first time a truly international gathering. For the first time non-European nations will be effectively present. The United States, Japan, and the British self-governing colonies will be participants, and not spectators as at Algeciras. The old basis of internationalism was purely European; it is now literally international and intra-continental. The old European conference of six Powers in which the affairs of the world were settled in accordance with European interests is gone forever. A more vital, more sweeping, more fundamental change is scarcely to be thought of; compared to it the whole panoply of mechanical arrangements of peace congresses, tribunals, and committees, fades literally into insignificance.

It is again openly admitted that the old international law was in practice little better than the rules of the admiralty courts of the six European Powers. The law which governed Asia and Africa was made in Europe and rejected in America. All the Allied nations now stand committed to the creation and adoption of an international code, which may fall short of a whole-hearted adoption of the theoretical code elaborated in the last two centuries by professors and stu-

dents, but which will none the less be for the first time in history an international law based upon intercontinental and intra-national considerations. These propositions, indeed, are not considered open to debate; they have been accepted by all the Allies as facts and they will govern the character of the debates in the new peace congress. Broad guarantees of a type and character never before dreamt of have been given by the great Powers to all neutral and small nations of their sovereignty and independence. The freedom of the seas has been pledged as never before. The sanctity of treaties is a proposition not open to dispute. These far-reaching, fundamental, and significant steps will change the whole character of the peace conference, but they have been created by the war itself and are not to be disturbed by the deliberations of groups of men around a table, nor by the tongues of a thousand delegates in a peace palace.

But beyond these, the practical questions which will appear are to be gaged by their relation to one very great and immediate object. The peace congress is to be so conducted as to give Germany no practical chance to avert the consequences of defeat or to destroy the reality of victory by sowing dissension among the Allies in secret or public discussions over the terms. So serious have been past experiences, that the European Allies felt it of the utmost consequence that the adjustment of their own vital interests with each other should be made previous to the peace congress, if possible during the war, and should not be at the conference itself either discussed or open to debate. A number of extremely explicit arrangements and engagements were therefore signed and have been in one way or another made public. They are still accepted as binding and do in a very real sense predetermine the outlines of the coming peace. Some modification of these treaties in the light of subsequent events may indeed be expected to form part of the work of the congress. Certain slight changes in the relations between the various Allies are entirely possible. There will be, furthermore, issues not covered by the treaties to be discussed and decided. There will be the cases of the small nations, of the neutral states, of conflicting claims. These can be and many of them will be publicly discussed; some of them in their very nature cannot be and will not be publicly considered. The Conference will then dictate to Germany the terms the Germans must accept, in all probability not in public, but there will be eventually a public

session in which the terms will be announced which the Germans have privately agreed to accept and to which they will then formally agree.

Unfortunately, a considerable number of the unofficial advisers of the President do not seem to see, as surely he does, the great danger that American insistence upon literal publicity of diplomacy beyond a certain elemental point may be misconstrued abroad as distrust in the United States of the Allies' own purposes, and as a desire to thwart plans which their statesmen and leaders believe essential for the practical settlement of immediate issues. Some American idealists and some in England and France have been demanding in so many words a change of government in Allied countries as not less necessary than one in Germany. They complain that the men who have fought the war in their own states are barely less dangerous to the future of internationalism than the Kaiser himself, only in less degree determined to prevent its erection and to create an imperialism only less offensive than that of Germany. These men are anxious to put the British Labor Party in the saddle, to expel certain statesmen in France and in America from the council of nations. Naturally such men speak for themselves and the serious minded will not impute their plans to the President, but there is some danger that considerable sections of Allied opinion may feel that these gentlemen represent in this country an influential element of public opinion.

It would be a calamity for the United States to part company in any sense or in any degree with her European associates in arms whether on issues of internationalism or of explicit territorial arrangements in Europe. It should be said advisedly that if the Allies should conclude that the support of the United States was doubtful for such explicit arrangements as they themselves deem essential to safeguard them from German interference in the future, a secret peace might be signed between them covering European arrangements alone. They cannot themselves create or ratify international arrangements, but the terms which concern Europe alone they can make without consulting us and perhaps contrary to our intentions and interests. Such a result would be lamentable indeed and would go far to destroy the solid achievements toward internationalism which have already been made. It will be necessary for the United States to accept in absolute good faith the decisions of the Europeans so far as they

concern directly their own internal arrangements or their own immediate relations with each other. These are no more questions which we should expect them to allow us to decide than we should in turn permit them to dictate to us our relations to Porto Rico or the revision of the Platt amendment with Cuba. A not inconsiderable number of the issues which will appear at the peace conference will be of this character, and they will expect us to accept on these questions their own good faith and honorable intentions as they will expect to accord us similar treatment upon questions primarily American. It seems probably more essential that we should agree with them even at the cost of some compromise in practical and abstract matters than that the United States should at this juncture attempt by pressure to secure a greater measure of internationalism than Europeans deem practical in view of the origin of the war and of its conduct.

ROLAND G. USHER.